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HIRANO

A Story
of a
Japanese
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HAIL



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"He made his way along." Page 5.

H I R A N O

A Story of a Japanese Town

By REV. JOHN E. HAIL

Missionary in Japan

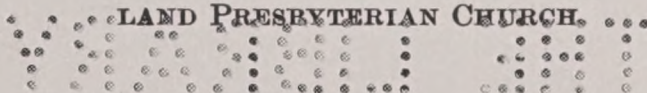
Second Prize Story

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HIRANO:

A STORY OF A JAPANESE TOWN.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW KIND OF JESUS WAY.

Gehei having drunk more saké than is good for any town-crier, his feet were wandering back and forth across the narrow street as he slowly made his way along. What seemed to be an inverted butter bowl, decorated with artificial flowers and tall feathers, covered his head. As he went he repeatedly struck together two small wooden blocks, which he held in his hand, making a sound that carried far, while he announced:

"There will be a meeting at Mediya hotel to-night. A foreigner, a great scholar, will tell about the Jesus way. Not

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the old Jesus way, you heard of before. This is a new kind, an interesting kind of Jesus way."

In a little while the news was spread over the greater part of the town by the crier, whose tongue was more nimble than his feet.

Gen and Taro were busy throwing small red disks on the ground in an exciting game of "betta," the main object of which is to turn over the other player's disks.

"I am going to see the foreigner. My brother says foreigners are eight feet high and all of them have red hair and blue eyes. He knows. He has been in Osaka," said Gen.

"So! They must be giants. I'm going, too. How can they see anything with blue eyes?"

"See? They can see in the dark!"

Farther down the street a carpenter, with a towel tied around his head and a loin-cloth around his thighs, was sitting in his shop working on a board, which he

A New Kind of Jesus Way.

held between his toes. He was considering, in a slow, sleepy way, whether he should go to hear the foreigner.

A few doors beyond the carpenter's, the grandfather of a household, the Oji San, was talking about the foreigner and the Jesus way.

"What country does the foreigner come from?"

"From England, I think," replied his son.

"I'd like to hear him talk. I never heard an Englishman talk English. But I don't like to hear anything about Christianity because it teaches men to be disloyal, and children not to obey their parents. And, besides, it is a kind of magic."

"Oh, no, it's no magic. It's just like Buddhism, only they worship different gods, that's all."

"Well, I think I'll go to hear the Englishman. I always did want to hear the English language."

In the meantime, the foreign missionary, Mr. Walters, and his dendoshi, or evangel-

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ist, Wasa San, were talking, in their room at the hotel, about the town and its possible openings for Christian work, when the ne san, or servant girl, drew back the sliding doors and brought in the supper of egg soup, raw fish, beans and rice. After a short prayer by the dendoshi, they began to eat. They were still talking about the place, and the reason why the Congregationalists and Episcopalians had stopped working in it so long ago, when the shoji, or sliding doors, were again pushed back and a young man of about twenty entered the room. Turning to the foreigner, he began abruptly, "Do you spoke English?"

"I do," was the reply.

"I may practice you the short time in English?"

"Certainly ; while I am finishing my supper you may."

"America, is it your country?"

"Yes, I am an American,"

"What is your salary? How much money do you receive?"

The Carpenter at Work.—Page 6.



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"My salary is about what it was when I lived in America. Where do you live?"

"My country is Izumi. Do you know?"
And so the conversation went on.

The meal having been finished, the dendoshi held out his rice-bowl to the ne san to be filled with hot tea, with which he would wash down all the remnants of his supper that were still left in his mouth. Then the ne san took away the little tables, and all signs of the meal were gone.

Mr. Walters invited the student of "English as she is spoke" to join them in the meeting to be held immediately in the assembly room of the hotel. As the three entered the assembly hall they saw that the sliding partitions between three adjoining rooms had been taken out, and thus one large hall had been made. An assorted crowd of children, old people, mechanics, farmers, tax-gatherers, clothed and unclothed, for the weather was warm, was seated inside the hall, on the floor, chattering, smoking, joking, and laughing, while

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in the rear, standing on the ground in the passage way, was another crowd, made up of women and men whose faces could scarcely be made out by the help of the dim light in the hall.

Evidently curiosity had brought most of the people, though here and there in that mass might be hearts longing for a light and a life which as yet they knew not, nor had ever heard of. As the foreigner and the two with him entered the hall, there was a lull, like the calm between gusts of wind, then the chattering broke out again.

The missionary spoke in a low tone to his evangelist, who then called on the children, who had pushed to the front, to sing the national hymn.

“Our Emperor live
A thousand cycles, eight thousand,
Till pebbles are grown
To moss-covered rocks.”

Perhaps Sousa's band would have made better music, but they could not have put

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more vim into it than those village boys did.

"Let us all bow down and be quiet while a short prayer is made to the true God," said the dendoshi. The foreigner bowed while the evangelist led in a short prayer. The others looked on with curiosity and some made side remarks. Wasa San, the evangelist, spoke first, and for more than an hour he preached Christ to the people. When he had finished, the missionary rose to speak.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOREIGNER.

There was a rustle among the audience as the people craned their necks to get another good look at Mr. Walters and smothered their exclamations as to his great height. He read the wonderful story of the Prodigal Son, after which he tried to repeat the story in colloquial Japanese, so that if any were present who did not know the written language, they might not fail to get the story. Then he explained that Christians believed that there was only one true God, who had created all things. He is the Father of all men. All men are his children. Jesus Christ told this story of an earthly father's love in order to show the heavenly Father's love. Then the missionary began to point out many particulars in which a father's love reveals God's love.

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The carpenter, who was still clad in his towel and loin-cloth, began to move toward the front when the foreigner began to preach. His first objective point seemed to be one of the tall hotel lamps on the floor a few feet away from the speaker. Here he stopped, got out a pipe and tobacco pouch from some invisible hiding place, and seemed about to knock the lamp over, as he drunkenly tried to light his pipe. In spite of his awkwardness the pipe was lit without turning over the lamp, and he sent up little wreaths of blue smoke as he stared at the preacher.

A boy near him began to giggle at some mistake Mr. Walters made in his language. Instantly the carpenter's hand fell on the offender, and his "Damate!" (Shut up!) could be heard from one end of the hall to the other. The missionary began to wish that the drunken fellow had not come.

As the speaker proceeded, his eye would continually return to the carpenter, who was gradually edging his way to the front.

The Foreigner.

Mr. Walters was telling the story of "Jimmy," a prodigal son who had run away from his Tennessee home and had never returned. With the coming of sorrows and the flight of years Jimmy's father had grown crazy. On one subject only did his mind remain clear. He remembered Jimmy and how he had gone away from home. Day and night, summer and winter, whether the rain fell or it was dry, every train that stopped at that little village found the gray-haired old man waiting at the station to see if Jimmy had come home yet or not. The old father had forgotten every one and everything else in the world, but he could not forget his child.

While the missionary was telling this story and trying to show how true it is that God can never forget his children, the carpenter held his pipe in his hand so long that it went out. This time, to light the pipe, he moved to the lamp by the side of the missionary and there found the necessary fire.

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Taro had just given Gen an unexpected punch in the side and was gazing with a shocked expression on his face at another boy, as if that other boy had done the punching, when the foreigner stopped. With the sudden ending of the sermon Taro started guiltily and Gen, who had been puzzled for a moment as to whom to punish, returned the punch with compound interest.

Wasa San announced that immediately following a short prayer they would hold a "shisumonkai," or meeting to ask and answer questions on the subjects about which he and the missionary had been talking, or any other questions which anyone might wish to ask about Christianity.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHISUMONKAI.

The missionary stepped forward and pronounced the benediction in the midst of a confusion of sounds made by the people, who all seemed to start away all at the same moment.

As he finished, from a corner of the room, above the general din, arose the voice of the evangelist, announcing the fact that he had forgotten to say that he had a lot of tracts for free distribution. If anybody wanted one—— There was a rush to his corner and it seemed as if a forest of hands had suddenly sprung up.

“No, no, no. I can’t give anything to anyone who stands up and holds out his hands. You must all sit down or I can’t give you anything.”

Down came the crowd on the floor again. As rapidly as he could Wasa San gave out

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the tracts and received the thanks of the people, most of whom left. About a dozen men remained behind, besides Gen and Taro, who this time thought it prudent to get near the door, not knowing whether a couple of boys would be welcomed or not.

The dendoshi clapped his hands loudly. A prolonged "Hei," sounding very much like the cry of a nanny goat, was heard from toward the kitchen of the hotel. After a time the ne san appeared in order to learn the honorable wishes of the master. Wasa San told her to bring in some tea for the gentlemen. She glided out, got a hibachi, or brazier, full of live coals, a kettle of hot water, a teapot, and a sufficient number of cups. In the proper manner she prepared the tea and served the gentlemen.

"It is all right now," said the dendoshi, and the girl left the room. It was an assorted company which composed the shi-sumonkai.

The Shisumonkai.

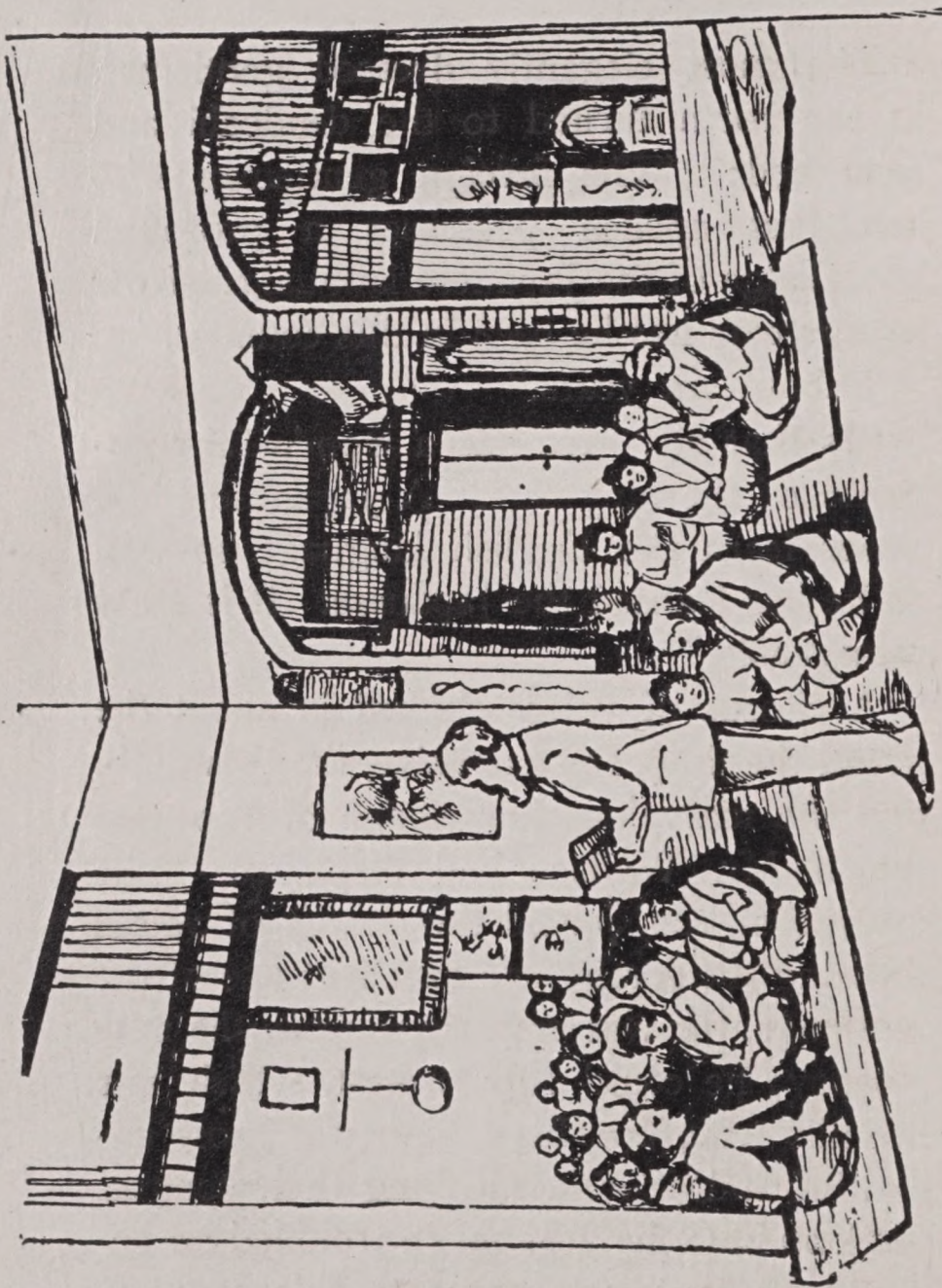
The most elegantly dressed gentleman in the room turned to the dendoshi and remarked: "The foreign gentleman who has just spoken possesses a profound knowledge of the Japanese language. How many years has he been in this country?"

"About six years."

"Is that all? He has a wonderful command of the language. A Japanese could never learn the English language so well as he has learned the Japanese. It is truly remarkable."

A chorus of voices chimed in about the great, the deep, the extensive, the thorough, and the marvelous knowledge of Japanese which Mr. Wallace had displayed. The evangelist, too, joined the chorus of voices praising the foreigner's excellent use of the language. It was embarrassing to the missionary; he could only protest, which was literally true, that his mouth was most unskillful and poor in speaking their tongue.

"You must be very much troubled on account of having to come to this country.



“The missionary rose to speak.”—Page 12.

The Shisumonkai.

It is such a dirty, insignificant, little country. You must be exceedingly troubled, your own country being so great, so beautiful," remarked a voice.

"This is the most beautiful country I ever saw," answered Mr. Walters.

"So-o. But you must be very lonesome without any friends here?" spoke another voice.

"How large the foreigner is," said one voice aside; "he would make two Japanese."

"Yes," said the evangelist, "I am an average sized Japanese, but I look like a little boy by his side. What splendid bodies the foreigners have."

While this sort of conversation was being indulged in, pipes or cigarettes were gotten out by most of the men and a little cloud of tobacco smoke began to fill the room.

"Was Jesus an American?" a voice inquired from behind a pillar of smoke.

"No. He was an Asiatic."

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"Um. How many gods do you worship?"

"We believe in and worship only one, the true God, whom you sometimes call Heaven, who made all things."

"But in a prayer a little while ago you worshiped a lot of gods. There was the Spirit, then there was another god you called the Son, and another you called the Father. There may have been some more. Besides these, don't you worship Jesus?"

"Well, these are all names of the one true God."

"I see. Where do you keep your god-shelf in your home? And how many gods do you put on it?"

"The God we worship is one God, invisible, a spirit, and everywhere we go he is. He seeks true worshipers to worship him in spirit and in truth. Men's hands have not made him, and we cannot put him on any god-shelf."

The carpenter, who had been quiet from the beginning of the shisumonkai, asked,

The Shisumonkai.

"What entrance fee is a man charged who becomes a Christian?"

"There is no charge whatever for becoming a Christian."

"How do you worship the Father in heaven?"

"We speak to him just as a child speaks to its parents, and he hears us even though we cannot see him."

"I was very much interested when you were telling about that father who made so many sacrifices for his little sick child, and you said that he showed what God's love is like. My little child became very sick and I was much troubled, so I took him on my back to the doctor and got the medicine he ordered for him. The boy did not get better, so I put him on my back again and carried him back and forth from my house to several temples, but he was only getting worse. I spent all my money for him. I sat up late at night nursing him, and I got up early in the morning to take care of him. I stopped my work to

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watch over him. I would have given my life to make him well. At last I joined the Tenrikyo* and gave them all my property to cure my boy. But they could not cure him. Every morning I have prayed and every night I have prayed, but my prayers have not been heard. I have given all I had for help, but there has been no help for me."

There was silence for a little while as the man took up his pipe again. Then, as both the evangelist and the missionary were about to speak, a voice broke the silence, asking, "What do you mean when you say 'Amen?'"

The meaning was explained.

"I must go now as I have some very important business which I must attend to," said the silk-robed gentleman who had been so loud in praise of the foreigner.

All now began to give like reasons for leaving, and took their departure.

* A faith cure sect of the Shintoists.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT AT MEDIYA HOTEL.

The ne san came in to take away the lights and shut up the rooms. The two Christian workers went to their rooms to pray over the work of the day, that its mistakes might be overruled, and that every honest effort made, and every word spoken might yield a good harvest in the days to come.

As the missionary was disrobing he heard a sound behind him, as though paper was being torn, but when he looked behind him he could see nothing unusual for some time. At last he saw that a hole had been punched through one of the sliding, paper-covered partitions between his room and the next guest room. Presumably this had been done by somebody's finger. Through the hole he could see a black eye gazing intently at him as he stood

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there. When he moved toward the eye, it promptly disappeared. Picking up the two halves of the basket in which he carried his personal effects, tracts and books, he piled the one half on the other in such a way as to cover the hole, and finished disrobing, put out the light and went to bed.

It was not long before the missionary was sweating and rolling on his futons, or mattresses, under the low, close, dark green mosquito net. This hung so low over the bed that he could push up the top of it from where he lay with his hands. It was hot. He could not forget the meeting, try as he might to put it out of his mind. Why did the people compliment his bad Japanese and seem so little interested in his message? Did he really do any good by his efforts? Was that carpenter in earnest in his remarks, or was he only half drunk? Wasn't the general effect of the meeting bad and not good?

He did not sleep well. A mosquito got

A Night at Mediya Hotel.

inside the net and did a humming business. A Japanese flea crawled out of his hiding place in the top futon, and, small as he was, the missionary had to scratch to keep up with him. Next some rats began to make a rattling noise in the low ceiling. Then a baby, away off somewhere, began to cry and refused to be comforted. Then a cat began to wail mournfully. Then the man was asleep again. Now he thought the wind was blowing a gale, but, as he gradually waked up, the gale turned into the noise of the rats scampering up and down the low ceiling. He wondered if the rats were running races, and tried to find out how many there were of them by counting the different noises they made. Before the rats were counted his mind was in America. An episode in his life as a young theological student, boarding in a hospitable country home one vacation, kept coming into his mind. His hostess' little four-year-old boy, Johnnie, had his first pair of trousers.

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They were little knickerbockers, which looked as if they might have been made out of a handkerchief, but how proud the little boy was! Johnnie wanted to swim in the branch which ran through the meadow, where the cows were grazing, but his mother forbade his going near it. Not that there was the slightest danger of his drowning, for there was scarcely enough water in it to drown a newly hatched chick; she did not want him to get wet and dirty. But Johnnie ran off to the tiny stream, took off his precious new clothes, and began to paddle in the water. Then an old cow came down and scared him away and ate up the new knickerbockers. The first that Johnnie's mother and the young theologian knew of the matter was when Johnnie came toward them, sobbing out the news as if his heart would break. "The old cow—hu — hu — ate up — hu — hu — my — hu — hu—new pants!"

The missionary started. His hand had touched something cold. What was it, a

A Night at Mediya Hotel.

snake, a rat? He put out his hand very cautiously. It was his watch, which in some way had slipped out from under the futon that had been rolled up for his pillow. Once more, back from American scenes, he was sweltering and worrying in the midst of mosquitoes and fleas. Really there were not many mosquitoes, nor many fleas, but each was a host in himself.

The longest nights have an end, and those who say they cannot sleep usually sleep more hours than they are aware of. Dawn began to creep in through the cracks. First the sounds of people stirring, followed by a medley of screaming, bumping noises, began to rise, as the servant girls began pushing back the wooden walls which had kept the house safe from thieves during the hot night. Glad that daylight had come, Mr. Walters was soon dressed and down at the hotel toilet room, if such that out of doors washing place may be called.

Three brass wash bowls rested on a wooden stand, while just to the right was

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a large bucket of clear water. A shelf, in easy reach, hung from the low roof back of the stand, and on it were the tooth-brushes and salt generously provided by the landlord for those of his guests who might wish to wash their teeth.

Refreshed by his ablutions the missionary returned to his room. It had been emptied of mosquito net and bedding, and nicely swept, while he was making his toilet. A little kettle was simmering over the bright coals in a hibachi, while by the brazier were placed the utensils for making tea.

CHAPTER V.

WHY NOT STAY?

The sliding doors were pushed back, Wasa San entered, and began the usual polite inquiries by saying, "Since last night honorably tired, are you not?"

After the set "orei," or polite salutations, had been made, Mr. Walters asked, "What are those fish heads I saw nailed up over the doors of so many of the houses in Minabe? I have seen them in several villages, but I never could understand what they were for."

The dendoshi laughed. "Oh, they are to prick the devil's nose. Did you notice that all those fish heads were surrounded by sharp stickers? You see the people believe that the devil likes fish, and when he is going about the streets of the town, whenever he smells one of those fishes he flies straight to it, as fast as he can go,

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and tries to take a bite, but the thorns stick his nose and he flies away from that house, and won't go near it until he comes to the town next time."

"Well, it seems to me that the devil is very foolish if he doesn't learn after a few such experiences to let those fish heads alone."

The ne san entered with a breakfast exceedingly like the three meals which the Christian workers had eaten the day before, and the day before that, and each day since they had left home. As breakfast was ending, Mr. Walters asked the ne san to bring the go kanjo, or honorable bill. When it was brought in, the missionary noticed that after the regular custom every article they had touched, or had not touched, had been charged for. He laid down the amount of the bill, together with the extra gratuity, or chadai, which custom from the dim past has decreed must be given.

"What is this extra money for," asked

Why Not Stay?

the ne san, with a look of surprise, as if she had never seen such a thing done before.

"That is the chadai."

"Oh! thank you, exceedingly."

Near the hotel door Mr. Walters was putting on his laced shoes, which operation was being watched by the hotel people with polite interest. A servant girl had offered to lace the shoes, but her offer had been declined.

While Mr. Walters was thus engaged, Wasa San turned to the landlord and said, "I did not see you at the meeting last night."

Fetching up a cough with some effort, the landlord replied, "I was terribly troubled because I could not go, but unfortunately I had a very bad cold and could not attend on that account."

"It was truly a great misfortune that you were suffering with such a terrible cold. But you ought not to refuse Christianity before you know what it is. I saw a farmer in Osaka last week. It was his first time

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in the city. He was very tired and hot and thirsty, so he stopped in at a tea-house and asked if they had any cold drink. They told him that they had some bottles of lemonade, which had been lying on ice. He ordered a bottle. But when they pulled the cork and it came out with a pop, the noise startled him. Then when he saw it foaming, and vapor rising from the top of the cup which they poured the lemonade into, he wouldn't touch it. He got very angry and said, 'Do you think I am going to drink that hot stuff?'

"'It's not hot. It's ice cold,' they said.

"'You can't fool me into thinking that that isn't hot. I can see it boiling with my own eyes and I can see the steam coming off of it. You can't fool me.'

"So he paid the bill, but he wouldn't touch the lemonade. Now don't be like that man and refuse Christianity before you know what it is. I tell you that Christianity is a good thing for you and for the country."

Why Not Stay?

"Thank you. Yes, Christianity is a very good religion," said the landlord politely.

Then, as the travelers left the hotel, the proprietor and all the servants followed them to the door with good wishes for a pleasant trip and a speedy return.

As the two men walked toward the station, Mr. Walters thought he recognized in the crowd which tagged after them two of the boys whom he had seen at the meeting the night before. He was certain of it when one of them came to him in the third-class waiting room at the station and asked him for the loan of a Jesus book. The missionary gave the boy a paper bound copy of the gospel of Luke, which he happened to have in his pocket.

"How would you like to have a Sunday school here?" asked the big foreigner.

"I would like it very much," said Taro. He did not have the slightest idea of what a Sunday school was, but he thought that such an answer would please the foreigner.

"Would you attend the school?"

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"Yes."

"And would you bring the other boys, your friends?"

"Yes."

The opening of the platform gates broke up the conversation. The train came, tarried a few moments and was gone.

On the train Wasa San remarked that it would be much better to spend a week at a place like Hirano, where there were no Christians, in order to follow up the impressions which were made at the first meeting, than to do as they were doing.

Mr. Walters agreed that that would be the wisest course, but tried to point out that the funds were too limited for them to do that and yet visit all the needy places. But it was hard to get the evangelist to understand that there could be any failure on the part of rich Americans to provide the comparatively small amounts needed to make longer stops at the different places on their circuit.

CHAPTER VI.

IMPRESSIONS.

In Hirano the meeting made different impressions on different people.

The Oji San was greatly pleased over the fact that he had understood nearly everything the foreigner had said.

"Why, I understand the foreigner quite well. I am so glad that I went to hear him. I understood him very well. I didn't know the English language was so very much like the Japanese."

A roar of laughter from the other members of the family disconcerted the old man for a minute.

"What are you all laughing at?"

"Why, Oji San, the foreigner didn't talk in English at all. He talked in Japanese altogether."

"So-o. I thought it was the English language he was using all the time."

In another place the silk-robed gentle-

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man who had been so loud in his praise of the foreigner's Japanese, was laughing over his blunders.

"Did you notice that he said Jesus had committed murder in Judea for the sins of all the world? Well, he meant to say that he was murdered. Then do you remember how he said that his fellow countrymen like to take a sharp knife and skin good children and eat them? That was the funniest mistake. I couldn't imagine what he meant for a long time, but I know now. He said *kodomo* for *kudamono*. He meant to say, 'Take a sharp knife and pare good fruit and eat it.'"

The carpenter had poured cold water over his body, and gone through all the other rites of the Tenrikyo, as he worshiped their gods that morning after the meeting, and then he prayed to the Christian's God, "Father, hear me and save my little boy." After that he went through his daily round of toil and bargaining with a lighter heart than for a long time past.

Impressions.

Among those who attended the meeting at the hotel was a young man, Banno San, who was intensely interested in what he heard. When the tracts were distributed at the close of the meeting, Banno San received a paper bound copy of Matthew. In his home, a quarter of a mile away from the village, Banno San spent many hours poring over the book. He was spellbound. It was the most deeply interesting book he had ever read. To be sure, it was very, very hard to understand. But when he came to the passage, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you," he was carried away with the thought. "It is wonderful. It must be the truth." Through the days which sped by there was constantly running through his mind, like a rippling brook, the words, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you."

Though there was no one to instruct

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him, no one to explain the difficult passages in the book he had so quickly learned to love; and though his knowledge of Christianity was so limited, yet he was convinced that a teacher who taught such wonderfully beautiful truths must be *the* teacher of men.

Under the passage he could not understand he pasted little pieces of red paper, so that when the missionary came back he could instantly find the hard verses and have the meaning made clear.

Banno San's father and mother were Buddhists; being their only son, he had always had his own way. Now he met opposition in the home as he began to make known his growing belief in Jesus. His father was rather indifferent to the whole matter, but his mother was certain that if he forsook their gods and the gods of their fathers, some awful disaster would overtake not only him, but also the whole house.

Banno San's home was not the only place

Impressions.

into which Christ sent a sword, in which one member of a family was arrayed against another. The Oji San, who went to the meeting for the sake of hearing an Englishman speak the English language, brought home a tract telling about the essentials of Christianity. His son, Jutaro, who had guarded the house while the others went to the meeting, read the tract and pronounced Christianity to be really not a bad religion for either country or family. The Oji San, while admitting that nothing very objectionable had been said in the Christian meeting which he had attended, except the statement of the foreigner that Jesus had committed murder, yet maintained that Christianity ought not to be permitted in the country. Christianity certainly taught disloyalty to the nation and disobedience to one's parents. Besides, it was a bad system of magic.

"My grandfather told me that his wife's uncle once read about something a Christian did. It was in the summer time and

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the Christian wanted some snow, so he called for a dish, and, after he got it, he said something and threw it into the air. A cloud came down and carried off the dish. In a very short time the dish came back with snow piled up high in it.

“Another time he saw a long black box. They called it a Christian box. If there was anything you wanted to see, you turned the box around while you were peeping into it with one eye, and there were the things you were wondering about. Christianity is a bad, dangerous religion.”

Jutaro was silent, for he could not prove by eye-witnesses that Christianity was not a system of magic, but he was resolved in his heart to study the new religion more thoroughly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JAPANESE PRODIGAL SON.

Taro, Gen, and a lot of other boys about their age were engaged in a boisterous game of onigoto, or devil-doing, one morning at recess, when Jutaro was passing the public school on an errand. Jutaro stopped to watch the boys at their game. He noticed at his feet a soiled paper book. He stooped down, picked up the book, and looked at it. It was a very dirty, torn, paper-backed copy of the Gospel of Luke. Jutaro saw, after examining it, that he had evidently found a book which told many things about Jesus and Christianity which he could not find in the tract the Oji San had brought back from the meeting.

He put it into his sleeve and left the play-ground. That night, after supper, he began to read the book. He had to read slowly, for everything in the book was so

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strange, and many of the phrases were so unusual, that it took much time to make out the meaning in some places. In other places he could understand nothing.

He read on past midnight, into the early hours of the morning. At last he laid the book down. When he read the accounts of the different miracles which Christ wrought, what the Oji San had said about Christianity being a system of magic kept coming into his mind. But if Jesus used magic, he also taught some splendid things. The parables he thought were very good, particularly the parable of the Good Samaritan, though there were some things he did not understand in the story. The best story, he thought, was the story of the Prodigal Son. It reminded him of a Buddhist story he had read once about another prodigal son.

In that story the boy, by his sins, had reduced his parents to poverty, and was so bad that a council of their friends was called to decide what should be done with

The Japanese Prodigal Son.

him. At the time he was on a wild carouse, but he returned home before the family council had ended. He put his ear against the crack in the door and listened. He heard every one present say that as he was so worthless and bad, only one thing could be done, he must be turned out of house and home, his parents must never own him again. There was a silence. Then his old gray-haired mother rose and said, "He is my boy, my only son. I can never close my home to him." The old father added, with a trembling voice, "He is our boy, and though he turns his back on us, and breaks our hearts, and sends us to the grave, we can never turn away from him."

Jutaro stopped at the end of Christ's story of the Prodigal Son. He did not feel like reading more that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAPTIZED BY HEAVEN.

In Banno San's home the crisis soon passed.

One morning he announced that he was a Christian. His mother cried; his father said but little. Following his confession of Christ he said that he was going to burn his idols and Buddhist books. His mother begged him not to do this, but he was firm in his resolve.

He kindled a fire and put the idols in one by one. It was with a good deal of trepidation that he put in the first idol, but as no harm came from it he put in the others with great boldness. His mother refused to witness the sacrilege. His Buddhist books went in next. The last one he put into the fire was bound with a substance that glistened in the sunlight as he held it in his hands. His mother, when



"A new shrine was built."—Page 75.

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she gave him that book, had warned him to be exceedingly careful of it, for it had been given her by a very holy priest, who had told her to take great care of the book, for how they cared for it would affect their household greatly. He looked at the book for a minute, then threw it into the hot fire. There was a crackling noise and sparks began to fly. Banno San jumped, moved toward the door, then, with a foolish look on his face, came back and took his seat. The deed was done; he was a Christian, with all his idols burned behind him.

When he went to the tobacco shop that afternoon, with the zeal of a new convert, he began to talk to the clerk about Christ, and finally he told his secret—he was a Christian.

“You’re no true Christian. You haven’t been baptized, have you?”

“Well, no; I haven’t been baptized. I don’t know just how it is done.”

“My friend told me how it is done. He saw some Christian believers baptized once.

Baptized by Heaven.

They just pour some water on their heads, that's all. But you aren't a real Christian. You can't be till you are baptized. . . . Did you read the newspaper report that 250 people were drowned at Kobe yesterday? A big ship sank. It is terribly unfortunate."

On his way home Banno San was a good deal depressed over the idea that he was not a real Christian. Without his idols, without the Christian God, adrift with nothing to cling to, was that his fate?

He went to his room and began to read his beloved book once more. He read how John had baptized Jesus. He read the Sermon on the Mount, paying but little attention to the words he was reading. He was certain that he was a disciple of Christ, but—— That but, suggested by the clerk, kept rising in his mind. He began to think of how far short he came of Jesus' requirements. After all, what right had he to say that he was a Christian? Suddenly, the words of the angel entered his mind, "Thou

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shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus, a Savior from sin! For some unaccountable reason his heart was light and joyous again. Then he noticed for the first time how dark it had grown. The clouds had gathered while he was meditating, and the rain had begun to fall. His face lit with joy. Heaven was inviting him to come. He would be baptized by the hands of heaven. He walked out into the midst of the falling rain, and, standing in reverential attitude, confessed Christ before the world, and received the holy ordinance from the hand of the Creator himself.

The next day Banno San told the tobacco clerk that he had received baptism.

The clerk asked, "Who baptized you?"

"Heaven," he replied.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE WHO STOOD OUTSIDE.

Among the crowd which listened to the preaching of God's love that eventful night at the Mediya hotel, was a poor coolie. He had not ventured to go inside the building, but only stood at the door, where such miserable offscourings of the earth as he was were expected to stand. His name was Genski Tokuzo, but his master, Baba San, never called him anything but Genski.

Ever since he could remember he had worked in an umbrella factory. He had never been taught to read or write. All of his life he had been used to abuse. For a month's toil he received his daily rice and fifty sen. His master was not a cruel or hard-hearted man, as umbrella manufacturers go, rather the reverse. He was quite progressive. Over his one-story umbrella factory he had placed not only the

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customary Japanese announcements, but a sign-painter, who was skilled in wording and painting English signs, had prepared for him a large sign-board reading—

A VERY GOOD UMBRELLA SELL.

While it is true there were no English-speaking people in Hirano to be attracted by the sign-board, it nevertheless marked the place as the most progressive establishment in the town.

Genski did not get all that was said in the meeting. He was so far away from the speakers that he did not hear many things which were spoken. Besides, there was more or less confusion and talking around him all of the time. He carried away from the meeting two impressions. One was that foreigners were very large. The other was that there was a God somewhere who cared for poor people. At first Genski was more impressed by the foreigner's size than by anything else. He talked about it with his fellow coolies.

One Who Stood Outside.

Various speculations were advanced to account for foreigners being so much larger than Japanese. Some thought it was due to the wine they drank. One had heard that they ate meat, and he was sure that was the reason. Whatever the cause might be it was certain that the foreigner was larger than any Japanese Genski had ever seen, excepting some professional wrestlers.

Genski's life was one round of grinding toil. Treated like a dog, made to work from morning till night every day in the week, it was only on a rare matsuri, or holiday, that he was allowed to rest. About the happiest time he had was at the end of the month, when he received his pitiful wages and, getting as drunk as he could, felt himself as rich as the whole Mitsui family, and forgot all his troubles. The next day his body felt badly and his work was miserably done. Next in enjoyment to his monthly carouse was the bath, particularly in cold weather. During the winter weather Genski never had a chance to

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get warm until he got into the hot water at the public bath-house.

From pondering over the size of the foreigner, Genski began to think about his message. He could not remember the sermon he had heard, but the impression was fixed in his mind that there was a God somewhere who cared for all poor people and who wished to do them good. Just what kind of good this God wanted to do them he was not sure. Probably he wanted to give them enough to eat and drink and wear. He could hardly be a very great God to care much for people like Genski, but he must be very kind-hearted. Genski was wondering what name this God who cared for the poor bore, when his master's little girl, O Uta, came to the door and called to him, "Genski, come. Father wants you at once."

O Uta had been thinking about that Jesus she had heard the Japanese evangelist speak about at the meeting at the hotel. Who was Jesus? What country did he come

One Who Stood Outside.

from? Which god's only son was he? Why did the people kill him? It was remarkable how much the child remembered, and even understood, of what Wasa San had said.

Taro was passing, and when he saw the little girl he called out, "O Uta San, have you heard the news? The foreigner is back again and they are going to have another Jesus meeting at the hotel to-night. I'm going." O Uta resolved in her mind that she also would go. The foreigner was a great curiosity, and, besides, for some reason, she wanted to hear more about that Jesus.

To-day the town-crier was worse drunk than usual, and did not cover more than half his usual route, although when he got back he demanded ten sen extra for making the announcements.

Till after supper time a stiff breeze blew through the town and the air became very chilly and damp. As a result of this, when Wasa San and Mr. Walters came into the

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rooms which had been opened for the service, they saw an audience which, compared with the previous one, was disappointingly small. Mr. Walters, however, was too tired to be disappointed. That day he had written a large number of letters to America and mailed them just too late to catch the mail steamer; he had attended two sodans,* or gab-kwais, as he called them, where there had been some apparently interminable discussions over the most trivial matters, to which he had been required to give his undivided attention; he had made some pastoral visits; he had explained and re-explained some passages of Scripture to the dendoshi. There had been a long railroad trip, in which the only relief he had gotten was in watching the men in the coach fan their bare legs. At first he thought they did this too cool themselves, but he soon saw that it was done for the purpose of driving away the mosquitoes.

* A meeting held to discuss some particular subject in a friendly way.

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Back of that day there was a week of traveling, of bad food, of long night meetings, and of many house to house visits during the hours of daylight.

This time, when Wasa San asked the people to bow their heads and remain quiet while prayer was made to the true God, while no one's head was bowed excepting the missionary's, there were no side remarks made. The missionary noticed that a coolie was standing outside the door and went to him and invited him. Genski refused to enter at first, but afterwards came just to the edge of the room. The carpenter had put on a shirt out of respect to the occasion, and was sitting next to the speaker.

O Uta, O Ye, Hara San and several other little girls were sitting in front, opposite the carpenter, watching everything that took place.

Clustered around the carpenter were the boys, Taro, Gen, and several of their schoolmates. The Oji San, who had attended the previous meeting, in order to

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hear the English language spoken, was again present, strange to say. Besides these, there were only two or three women and four or five men in the house.

Somehow, everything seemed to go the wrong way. The boys were restless and kept punching and pinching each other. They seemed to pay no attention to the evangelist as he spoke. One of the little girls went to sleep. A couple of grown people left before the dendoshi finished. There was apparently an awakening of interest when Mr. Walters preached, though his sermon was not so good as Wasa San's.

The evangelist announced that for awhile he would conduct Sunday school and preaching services every Sunday afternoon. He invited those present to come and bring their friends. After tracts had been given out another inquiry meeting was held.

The Oji San asked about the foreigner, what he ate, what he wore, how old he was, if he had left America to escape military service, and a number of similar questions.

One Who Stood Outside.

But after awhile he asked some questions about Jesus Christ and Christianity. When he was through, no one else seemed to have any questions to ask, so the meeting closed at a comparatively early hour. Every one left the hotel except Genski, who still stood waiting outside the door. Something prompted the evangelist to go to the coolie and speak to him.

The missionary saw that the two men were talking together quite earnestly, so he went to his room. An hour passed and still he saw no signs of Wasa San, so he retired for the night. The next day Wasa San told him that the coolie was much interested in the Jesus way and had talked with him until after one o'clock about Jesus, trying to understand the truth about God and Christianity.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOD WHO CARES FOR POOR PEOPLE.

The following Sunday Wasa San was face to face with a crowd of boys and girls, who for the first time in their lives were in a Sunday school. The Sunday school was held in a small room in the poorest part of the town, such as could be rented at a very low price, for there was little money which the rich Americans could spare for such purposes.

Wasa San tried to get his restless, moving audience quiet. After their spirits seemed to calm a bit, he offered a short prayer. Now how should he begin? What should he say to these children? For a minute he hesitated, then said: "I am going to tell you how God made the first man." At the prospect of a story the children were all quiet.

The God Who Cares for Poor People.

"A long, long time ago there were no men. So one day God was walking around and he thought he would make a man. So he took some clay and poured water over it, and then he chopped up a lot of straw real fine and mixed the straw and water and clay all up together this way. Then he took his hands and made a man out of the clay this way, and set him up to dry. By and by God went up to the man, when he was real dry, and puff! he blew into his mouth, just this way, and then the man breathed and talked and lived, just as you do."

"Is that the way God made foreigners?" inquired Taro.

"Oh, yes."

"Umph. Maybe he made foreigners out of dirt. He made Japanese out of better stuff than that!"

"Wouldn't all of you like to learn a hymn?"

"Oh, yes! oh, yes!" replied a lot of voices at once.

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“Let’s learn the one about the Happy Land first. It begins this way—

‘There is a happy land,
Far, far away.’”

Before they left the Sunday school that day most of the children had learned the song. It caught O Uta’s heart, and as she went home, she found herself humming that song the whole way. It seemed to her as if that happy land could not be very far away, even though the song said so.

A meeting for grown up people followed that for the children. About half a dozen people were present. Among them were the Oji San, Genski, and the carpenter. Genski had been sent by his master to carry some bundles to a store on the other side of the preaching place from the umbrella factory. On his way back Genski stopped to listen and then inquire about the way of Christ. The Oji San and the carpenter, also, had many things to ask. At last the evangelist

The God Who Cares for Poor People.

was compelled to dismiss them, as he had a night appointment in a town a few miles away.

Before Genski got back to the shop, he had invented a very plausible lie to explain why he was so slow in returning.

The Oji San returned to his home silently, and had so little to say to anyone that the home people began to ask him if he was sick.

The carpenter returned, determined for the present to worship only one God, the God whom the Christians called Father.

That night Genski prayed, and his prayer was :

"God, who cares for poor people, please care for a poor coolie like me."

Sunday after Sunday passed by and slowly grew the seed which had been planted in some hearts. Sometimes Mr. Walters, sometimes Wasa San, took charge of the Sunday school and preaching services. Once when the two came together they had an especially good meeting. The chil-

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dren learned rapidly. They were soon singing—

“Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so,”

and several other sweet hymns. So their childish voices told the Gospel story in song in more than one home. Was the message which the children unconsciously bore understood? No; the story of love which they sang seemed to carry no new life into those homes. Hard drudgery and superstition still reigned there supreme.

One Monday, Wasa San had some news about the work in Hirano. The first fruit of their seed sown was evident, but it was not much, only an ignorant coolie. Genski had declared himself a believer in Christ, but he was troubled in regard to one thing. He wished help and advice about that. In becoming a Christian he could readily give up his saké, but how about working on Sunday? He had to work every day in the year for his master. What could he

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do? If he should refuse to work on Sunday, Baba San would dismiss him, and then he could get work nowhere else. Besides, he was forty years old, too old to learn a new trade. He only knew how to do his work in the umbrella factory. Could he not continue his Sunday work and yet become a Christian?

Pity welled up in Mr. Walter's heart for the poor ignorant coolie, whose scant daily rice and fifty sen a month was all that stood between him and starvation. How important that wee mite must seem to the poor coolie. Mr. Walters said that he could give no advice in the matter; Genski must decide for himself.

Genski, to whom the matter seemed as one of life and death, felt unfairly treated and deeply disappointed when he found that the decision must be made by himself. What should he do? He tried to think of some way out of the dilemma, but no way presented itself. At last he prayed and waited, half expecting an answer to fall

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from the sky or rise from the earth. But no answer came. Genski was in a miserable state of mind. Several Sundays passed and still the matter was unsettled. One evening Genski was carrying a bucket of water for O Uta. The little girl began to tell him about some very holy men. They were very holy, indeed; they were very careful as to where they stepped, so that they might not accidentally kill an ant, or anything else. They always wore fine netting over their mouths to keep from swallowing any living creature, and every third day they fasted.

Genski almost dropped the bucket. A way out of his difficulties! For several days, whenever he could get a little leisure, he studied the matter over. At length he went to his master and said:

"I want you to keep back one-seventh of my wages at the end of each month, and every Sunday I am going to do without anything to eat."

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Baba San was startled. Evidently Genski was crazy, or else a fox had bewitched him.

"I want to become a Christian," continued Genski, "but if I do, I must not work on Sundays. As you give me my rice every day and fifty cents a month, I thought perhaps you would let me off if I starved on Sundays and gave up the money you pay me for my seventh day's work. Please let me do this; please let me become a Christian."

Genski's master was kind-hearted, and he hated to see Genski make himself lower or poorer than he already was. So he argued with him about the matter. But Genski was fixed in his mind. At last Baba San agreed to let him rest on Sundays on these terms. Thus it came about that Genski, the poor coolie, became a candidate for admission into the church of those who worship the God who cares for poor people.

CHAPTER XI.

AN IDOL ON ITS TRAVELS.

O Uta San was playing with Hara San. They had drawn a chain of nine circles, and O Uta was busy kicking a broken tile from one circle to the next, when the Oji San passed. He stopped to watch the children play. O Uta San kicked her tile to the end of the chain, and then began to kick it back again, two circles at a time. Two circles at a time was followed by three, and three at a time by four. At last, a little too much vigor, and the tile shot out of the row of circles. Now it was Hara San's turn. When she began, she kicked her stone so hard that it shot from the first to the third circle, and so she had to retire while O Uta San tried once more.

The Oji San moved away, thinking about what the evangelist had said concerning Jesus ; how he gathered the children around

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him and laid his hands on their heads and blessed them. The old man was more convinced of the truth of Christianity than he was willing to admit. Many things were at work undermining his faith in the old gods. One of the priests at the large Buddhist temple at the end of the town had stolen some money some time ago, and had just been sent to jail for it. It was impossible to deny that the evangelist behaved himself very kindly toward everyone. His kindness to the children especially won the heart of the old man. The Oji San had learned to-day for the first time about a Christian orphanage. An old friend from the city of Okayama had come to visit him, and only an hour ago had been telling the Oji San about the good work the Christians were doing in taking poor orphan children and making good, patriotic citizens out of them. Besides all this, Mr. Walters had preached a sermon on idols, and had given out some tracts on idolatry, which, together, were causing the old man



"He met two traveling priests."—Page 71.

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to wonder if, after all, the Christians might not be right about there being only one true God.

He walked slowly on, into the country. He met two traveling priests, one of whom bore a shrine with idols in it on his back; but he did not pause to worship, though he gave the priests a small coin. He paused and looked around him. A pale blue sky was over his head. The clouds near the horizon in the south were fringed with a light yellow, while the mountains before his eyes were clothed in a purple haze. A picturesque, straw-thatched farmhouse stood at his right. Out in the yard, amid a pile of straw, worked a farmer. The rice fields, little odd shaped patches from twenty to fifty yards in diameter, made the foreground in the picture which filled his eyes. "Utsukushi!" (Beautiful!) said the old man. Then he noticed a man, whose back was turned to him, busy doing something. Curious to know what it could be, the old man walked down the road to a

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nearer place, and began some polite inquiries as to Yama San's health and that of his family.

"You are taking a long walk to-day, Oji San," remarked Yama San.

"Yes, quite a long walk. I am better than usual," replied the Oji San, forgetting what it was he had intended to ask Yama San.

"Do you think we are going to have good weather from now on, Oji San?"

"Yes, it will be better weather from now. What are you doing with all that straw?"

"We used to have a little stone god in the corner there, but it disappeared two or three days ago. I thought this morning that I had better make a god to watch over this work and to take care of the place, so I made a god out of some of the straw and I have been using the rest of the straw to make a shrine for him."

The Oji San squatted down on the ground beside the farmer to rest, and both men got out their little pipes to have a

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smoke. While they were smoking and talking, they did not notice the little blaze which was creeping away from the spot where the ashes of one of the pipes had been knocked out in order to make room for fresh tobacco. The men smoked on and talked about many things. Yama San cleaned his pipe, put it in its pouch, yawned, stretched himself, got up, and turned around. Fire! Oji San jumped up as quickly as his stiff old legs could move. The half finished straw shrine and the straw idol were tumbling down in flames. Before any water could be brought, there was nothing but a pile of black and smoking ashes where the image had stood.

"Now that the god is burned up, I have nothing left to keep the house from burning down," said Yama San.

The Oji San condoled with him greatly upon the unfortunate accident, but when he found himself on the way back to town he could not help thinking about the helplessness of the idol—even unable to care

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for itself. He remembered that the den-doshi had told of a farmer making a good scarecrow, yet in a few days the crows found out that it was nothing but a scarecrow, and perched on its arms, shoulders and head, eating the grain around it. In telling the difference between the living and what has no life, were men greater fools than the crows?

The old man was nearly home. He stopped and watched the boys at their game of betta. A few yards away a snake was wriggling across the street. Gen saw it, and began to call out, "Snake! snake!" and point at the snake with his forefinger.

Taro caught Gen's hand and bent down the stretched out finger, and exclaimed, "Gen, your finger will drop off, surely. What made you point at a snake with your finger?"

"I forgot," said Gen, shamefacedly. "I do hope it won't drop off this time. It wasn't a very big snake I pointed at."

The Oji San left the boys and went on

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to his house. That evening his son, Jutaro, told him about the discovery of a new idol at the farther end of the town. Nobody could tell where it had come from. It was an image of Shaka Sama, and some said that it must have come over in the night from Korea. Wherever it had come from, it was certain that quite a miracle had been wrought. When the old man heard this news, his conscience began to trouble him, first, because he had doubted the power of the idols; then it began to smite him for believing in those very idols; until at length he became quite angry with himself for being so unreasonable. Several days passed.

Quite a little sensation was caused by the discovery of the idol. Some of the people made presents of money, and in a little time a new shrine was built over the spot where the idol had been found. On each side of the shrine poles were stuck in the ground, and on top of the poles were nailed tablets, on which were inscribed the

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different amounts of money given for the erection of the shrine, and the names of the givers.

The new shrine gave every evidence of becoming a popular worshiping place. One evening Jutaro was evidently amused about something. At last he said: "Oji San, you remember that new idol which appeared in town? I know now where it came from. I overheard Taro, Gen and a lot of other boys talking about it. It seems that a few nights ago some boys stole one of the stone idols out of the corner of Yama San's yard and carried it to the north end of Hirano, and left it on that lot where it was found. The boys are very proud that they have made such a sensation. But they are afraid to tell what they did for fear they might be punished."

CHAPTER XII

HIS FATHER'S GODS.

Taro got in late, with a dirty face which he didn't want to wash before he went to bed. His mother told him once more the same thing which she had told him so many times before, that when he was dreaming his spirit left his body, and was really in the place he was dreaming of, doing the things which he would afterward remember doing in his dream. When his spirit came back from a dream, if his face was dirty, his spirit wouldn't go back into his body. They would find his cold corpse lying under the futons in the morning.

He was so sleepy he wished to take the chance of dying during the night, but his mother would not allow him to go to bed dirty-faced; so his face was washed, and the dirty water thrown away.

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When Taro asked his mother why she always threw the dirty water away, she told him that if, when they were all asleep, their spirits became thirsty during the night, the thirsty spirits would leave their bodies and go and drink the nearest water they could find. So they must always have some clean water in the house for their own spirits to drink, and allow no dirty water to be near them.

The next morning Taro was all excitement in telling about an excursion which the whole school was going to make to Osaka. It was going to be fine. They must all wear their caps and uniforms, and though the trip was still two weeks off, he wanted his mother to get out his clothes right away.

It was this same day, after the Sunday school, that the Oji San told Wasa San that he wished to become a Christian. He did not believe in idols any longer. The dendoshi gave him a little book, entitled "The Three Principles of Christianity,"

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and told him to study it carefully. This same day Banno San attended the meeting and made himself known as a baptized Christian. The children, too, did exceedingly well in the Sunday school. O Uta and some of the other girls showed a very intelligent understanding of the lesson. It was a happy day to the evangelist.

The next Sunday, Taro and Gen were the only boys present, and they were very restless and inattentive during the lesson. Wasa San thought there must be something the matter. By and by, by means of his questions, he learned that one of the teachers in the public school had been warning the scholars against Christianity. He had told the boys that it would make them cowards and weak like the girls if they became Christians. They would never make brave soldiers; they would be unpatriotic, and they wouldn't obey their parents, if they learned this foreign religion. Said the teacher to the boys: "Loyalty and filial piety in a man are like the two wings to

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a bird. It is on them that our country rests. Your first duty is to the Emperor. Make this your mind: Our duty as weighty as the mountains, our lives as light as the dust. You must remember also your duty to your parents. You must always obey them. You must remember how they love you. The love of parents for their children is higher than the mountains and deeper than the ocean. Nobody can measure their love, it is so great. But this Christian religion is unfilial and unpatriotic." Then he hinted that any who attended Sunday school would have their grades marked down.

"Are you going to tell the teacher that you came to Sunday school?" asked Wasa San.

"No sir! no sir! We are going to tell him that we haven't been near the Sunday school."

The Oji San declared that afternoon to the evangelist that he wished to become a Christian. So it came about that the old

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man's name was written down as a candidate for baptism. He was asked if he would give up his idols. He certainly would. He understood that if he worshiped Jehovah he could not worship any other god. But when the Oji San returned to his home that evening, he did not find giving up his idols so easy a matter as he had thought it would be. The time for the evening offerings came. He hesitated. He was ashamed to confess his belief in Christ, when only a few months before he had said so much against Christianity. What if Christianity were a mistake after all, and if he were putting away real gods who would take vengeance on him for his faithlessness? The Oji San decided to make a compromise. He would make only half the usual food offering and he would use very small candles. This compromise was not satisfactory. After a few days' trial he came to the conclusion that he must give up his idols altogether. After putting the matter off several times, he set Friday eve-

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ning as the time when he would give up his idols forever. Friday evening came and he lit the candles and made his food offerings to the idols for the last time. As he gazed at them an inexpressible feeling filled him, as if he were breaking with life-long friends.

He took the idols, one by one, off the god-shelf, where they had presided so long, and, wrapping each up in a yellow cloth, he laid them tenderly away in a safe drawer. As the days passed away the Oji San was happy in his newly-found Savior and God. Yet at times the memories of the past would flood his mind, and, yielding to the impulse of the moment, he would bring out his old idols and fondly handle them over, then lay them carefully away.

His son did not object to his father becoming a Christian. He approved of the deed, but would not himself apply for baptism because there were too many things which he loved, but would have to give up if he became a Christian.

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One evening, when looking over his idols, the Oji San's old habits of reverence for the idols he had worshiped threescore years and ten came back to him. He felt as if it was a sacrilege to dump them into drawer and leave them there. Could he not put them on the god-shelf and leave them unworshiped? The idols must feel greatly troubled at being shut up in a drawer with no one to worship them. The old man was deeply tempted.

Suddenly it flashed into his mind that he, a Christian, who had put away these idols forever, loved them too much, and that as long as he kept them they would be to him a temptation to go back into idolatry. He must do away with them. The old man pondered over the matter. It was too late at night to build a fire and burn them. He would throw them into the little river which ran through the village. He would do it now, so that this temptation might never return to him. He found a big bag, quietly put the idols into it, and swung it over



"He watched them float away."—Page 85.

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his shoulder. It was the middle of February, near midnight. The streets were deserted and silent. The moon had risen and lighted the path until every stone stood out in bold relief. He walked to the middle of the bridge, took the bag from his shoulder, and shook the idols out of it into the dark water below. He watched them float away in the moonlight. There was an idol his mother had worshiped continually. It seemed as if he could almost make out his mother's face hovering near it as it disappeared. He saw, too, a larger idol floating away. His earliest recollections were of his father praying to that image. He, too, had prayed to it seventy years. With it were bound up the memories of the bitterest sorrows and the sweetest joys of his life.

As he gazed into the darkness where the idols had gone, he saw once more those idols on the god-shelf, food before them, the candles lit, his mother in the attitude of prayer; his father, his hands clasped, his

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head bowed; he saw, too, his own little children kneeling before the images. He felt as if his own mother, his old father, his little children, had passed out of his life forever.

At last he turned to go home. He shivered. He had not noticed how late nor how cold it was.

CHAPTER XIII.

NO MORE SUPPORT.

O Uta was much interested in watching Mr. Walters baptize Genski and the Oji San. She asked Wasa San many questions about the ordinance. What was it for? What did it mean? Who had a right to be baptized? Were children ever baptized?

A few Sundays later she told Wasa San that she wanted to be baptized. "You are nothing but a little girl; what do you know about being a Christian, or being baptized? People can't become Christians until their hearts have been made new," said the den-doshi.

"I don't know much about being a Christian, but I do love Jesus, who loved the children," replied the little girl.

"I shall talk to Mr. Walters about it," said the evangelist.

Mr. Walters thought she might receive

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baptism if she passed the examination and her parents did not object.

How O Uta pleaded with her parents, and how she persuaded them to consent to her baptism, she did not tell. They gave their permission, and one bright Sunday morning in the early spring she was baptized. The child was as bright as a sun-beam that day and all the way home she was humming the song—

“Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.”

At home they could not help remarking on how cheery and happy the child was.

O Uta came home one Sunday in tears.

“What was the trouble?”

“Wasa San said, when the sermon was ended, that the Sunday school and preaching would have to be given up. Mr. Walters looked for money from America, but the mail came and the letters said that the money for the rent could not be sent. Wasa San said for us not to feel badly

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because a whole lot of other places were in the same fix, and that he was going to lose his own situation, too. We won't see him any more, either," sobbed the little girl.

It was as the child had reported. Banno San, the Oji San, and Genski formed themselves into a comfort society, to comfort and help each other. They told O Uta that if she wished to, she might meet with them sometimes.

All the children, like O Uta, were much distressed. However, children's sorrows quickly flee. They were soon as merry as ever. The Sunday school and the sermons were gone, but in O Uta's memory they were still as real as they had been. She seemed to grow brighter, until her name might well have been changed to Sunbeam. At school, at home, everywhere, her laughing black eyes and the sound of her cheery voice did good to many hearts.

Sometimes, just before the sun sinks in the West, he paints the clouds around him

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with the brightest colors and passes from sight in a mass of glory. Sometimes those who are best loved when they silently, and perhaps unconsciously, begin to near the boundary between this world and the next display a brightness and joy they had not shown before.

So it was with O Uta San during those days of peace before it was known that a wasting disease had laid its hands on her. She had been growing thinner, paler, but was so full of joy, of fun, of sparkling brightness that no one thought of calling the doctor until she was lying under the blue futons, unable to rise. Then her father took her up from her bed on the floor, wrapped a futon around her, put the little girl on his back, and carried her to the doctor. He examined her and prescribed for her what he thought was good. As the days slowly grew into weeks, the little girl grew still thinner and paler. But it seemed to her father, when he would close his eyes and listen to her silvery laugh and

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hear her happy words, as if a song bird from a brighter, merrier world had come into his home.

One day the doctor told her father that he could do nothing more for the child.

"All I can do now is to give you some medicine which will keep her free from pain."

It was a cruel blow to the man and his wife. It seemed so hard to have to give her up.

The child was happy, and, lying patiently on her back, would sing over and over again the songs she had learned in the Sunday school. Two were her favorites:

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so,"

and—

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away."

"O Uta, don't you know that you are going to die?" asked her mother one day.

"Why, mother! why should I be afraid to die? I'm going to God's country."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WAY TO GOD'S COUNTRY.

One day the doctor's medicine did not relieve the pain and the little girl fretted and was not so bright as she had been, but towards the evening she grew brighter once more. After the simple meal was over and the dishes had all been washed and put away, her mother sat down by her side. She noticed that O Uta was smiling, almost laughing.

"What is it that makes my little girl laugh so?"

"I was just thinking, mother, that maybe in the morning I'll be in God's country."

"Oh, O Uta, you don't know what it means to die. How can your little feet go over the wild mountain?"

"Don't cry, mother, Jesus will carry me over the mountain to the beautiful country."

The mother was thinking of all that she

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had heard of the mountain of death—of the narrow footpath which little feet must tread; of the dark forest whose pines cast such dreary shadows over the narrow track, that the children needs must carry tiny lights to find their way; how, if the wind should blow down the mountain's side and the little candles go out, those weary feet must lose the way, and wander up and down through the bleak forest seeking but never finding the path again. If, perchance, any make their way over the mountain, they are in a country half dark, where imps set the little fingers, meant only to handle toys, at rough tasks which never end.

“Mother, don't cry. Just think, I'm going to God's country. It's beautiful in God's country.”

O Uta's mother said nothing more as she sat there holding her little girl's hand. O Uta had fallen asleep when her father came in. He was an educated Japanese who had never troubled himself about death. If he had been questioned his answer would have

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been, "Man's life is pitiable. It is like the water of a flowing stream which goes but never returns. Trouble and sickness are common to all. Eternity is oblivion and man's life is a floating bubble which soon disappears." Now he was face to face with the greatest grief he had ever known.

His wife told him that O Uta was happy, that the child could not realize what it was to die. Baba ordered his wife not to distress her any more than was needful. The woman bent over the sleeping girl once more and said, "She looks as if she were dreaming of good angels."

The next morning O Uta was stronger. There was more vigor in her voice. She seemed livelier than she had been, and spoke of all her friends and playmates. She told of games and pranks they had played together. She told about her Sunday school, and her teacher, and some of the things she had learned there. A faint hope began to creep into the loving hearts which had been beating so anxiously. But when

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the doctor examined her he told her parents that it was doubtful whether she would live through the day. All day the father and mother watched over their dying child.

"Little daughter, you are not afraid to die?"

"No, father; I'm going to God's country where Jesus is. It is beautiful there and he puts his hands on the children's heads and says good things to them. God's country is so beautiful, father, and Jesus is so kind to little children."

This was a strange way to die. Neither her father or mother had ever seen anything like it.

In the late afternoon O Uta turned her face toward her mother.

"Mother, when I'm in God's country, give Hara San my big doll."

"Yes, child."

"Don't cry, mother. I am so happy."

"But, little daughter, aren't you afraid?"

"Why no, mother. I'm going to God's country. God's country"—

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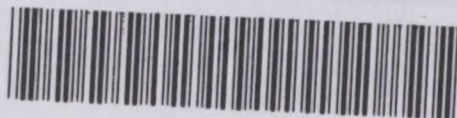
O Uta's eyes closed and she seemed to fall asleep as she had done so many times in her mother's arms. When they touched her they knew that she was in God's country.

"O Kune San," said Baba to his wife, "we must find some one to tell us the way to God's country."

THE END.

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